

Kyodan

News Letter

THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN JAPAN
JAPAN CHRISTIAN CENTER

551 Totsukamachi 1-chome
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160, Japan

Cable Address: Japankyodan Tokyo

Telephone: 202-0541

No. 67

October 20, 1972

HIROSHIMA SEIREIEN COMPLETES ITS FIRST YEAR

by Norio Ebie, Director

It's a year since we dedicated the building and accepted our first resident. In some ways it's been a long year; in other ways, it has gone by very fast.

During the year, sixty persons entered Seireien. Among these, seven have died, two found institutional living difficult and returned home, one was transferred to a home for the mentally ill. All sixty were persons who found themselves in very difficult family situations. There is much to be done for these people and for their families, and we are limited in what we can do by the size of our staff--yet this is true of all homes.

We are conscious of the fact that we have only begun to be involved, in a very small way, with the task and mission that have been entrusted to us.

On August 6, the anniversary of the date the A-bomb fell, the Home held a discussion of the wartime experiences of the residents, having in mind particularly the 20 persons who are A-bomb victims.

The Seireien Quarterly carries the experiences of the victims in a section titled "Listen to the Voices of the Elderly Victims."

Seireien Case Worker Setsumi Wakabayashi has written an article describing the problems of A-bomb victims. She reports the result of a recent survey showing that there are 1,188 elderly persons in Hiroshima either totally alone or suffering severe loneliness. The problem of how to care for these persons is a very serious one.

On September 14 there was a seminar in the community on the problems of the elderly, in connection with the national holiday on the 15th honoring the elderly. Many people reported how, after working for their children when they were younger, they finally reached the point where they could lay away a little for themselves only to have it drained off by hospital bills. There was a feeling of "there's nothing we old people can do about it." But a lecture by the head of a nearby hospital awakened participants to the fact that they must do something about it, and a campaign for signatures petitioning for more adequate medical allowances was launched.

Now that the first year is over we are free of some of the problems that resulted from the newness of the situation and can begin to reflect on the service Seireien is offering and consider the problems of other A-bomb victims and elderly people in our neighborhood.

The situation of Korean victims of the A-bomb is also very important and the moaning of a Korean resident who has forgotten Japanese and feels completely isolated is a constant reminder of our responsibility. We are looking for a Korean social worker and also searching for a full-time medical doctor--perhaps someone of retirement age who is willing to come for the modest salary we are able to pay.

USHERING IN THE DAY OF DIALOGUE

On Tuesday, October 10, twenty-four leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)--a denomination of 1.4 million members with headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana--met with an equal number of Kyodan staff members and guest participants for a Day of Dialogue. The day was one of the features in the visitors' six-day tour of Japan as a part of their 3-week program to "listen to political, social and church leaders in Asia."

On the morning of the 10th, six panelists presented basic statements on their churches' involvement in mission:

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ): Dr. Walter Bingham, Moderator; Dr. Kenneth A. Kuntz, Exec. Chr., Div. of Homeland Ministries; Dr. T.J. Liggett, Deputy General Minister and President

United Church of Christ in Japan: Dr. Kiyoko Takeda Cho, President, World Council of Churches; Rev. John M. Nakajima, Gen. Secy., National Christian Council; Rev. Toru Takakura, Gen. Secy., Kyodan.

After box lunches of Colonel Sanders' Kentucky (via Tokyo) Fried Chicken, eight encounter groups provided an opportunity for a direct exchange of opinion and experience on specialized areas, communications, women, education, NCC/WCC, theological education and ministry, minority problems.

Among the impressions brought back by members of the group after visiting Sunday services and preaching in various Tokyo churches were the high number of young people and the wholehearted singing and listening (although one troubled pastor, referring to the heads bowed in deep concentration or notetaking, said, "I never have had a congregation fall asleep so fast during my preaching."

The visit of the fraternal visitors' team, composed primarily of homeland ministries' personnel, represents a move from relationships through mission board structures to more direct encounter between church men and women carrying similar responsibilities for administration, specialized ministries and mission concerns.

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REACTIONS AGAINST BEING SUCKED INTO THE URBAN-INDUSTRIAL VORTEX are beginning to appear in Japan.....In September, after a lapse of three years, a Rural Pastors' Seminar was held at the Tsurukawa Rural Institute, at the request of rural pastors and churches.....The September-October issue of breakthrough (mimeographed publication of frontline mission thought) presents two careful analyses of the present state of rural communities in Hokkaido and Kyushu and the responsibility of the church toward them.....There are also occasional instances now of young men leaving the city for the country, preferring life outside the overcrowded metropolis and heavily polluted environment and finding challenges in modern agricultural methods and the fact that highly conservative postwar agricultural unions are changing as the older leadership loses its hold.....This tendency, say church men, calls for a new type of approach on the part of the church.

SHIKOKU TRIP

w.b.

In September, aboard the ferry that runs between Uno, on the island of Honshu and Takamatsu, a port on the island of Shikoku, vivid impressions of my first view of Shikoku 27 years ago came to mind. In 1945 I was on the bridge of a U.S. naval ship which was almost grounded as it tried to pass through the famous whirlpools of the Naruto Strait. Memories of the multi-colored mountains pushing through the morning mist and the shimmering waves of the Inland Sea came rushing up from the depths of near-forgotten experiences.



In 1972, the hills and mountains were still there in all their beauty, but the mushrooming cities with their skyscraper skylines were new. The Inland Sea still shimmers if one looks away from the water immediately surrounding the ship, but pollution has come to these waters in distressing ugliness.

I had been invited to Shikoku from Tokyo to drive the bookmobile for the Tokushima Christian Center with Jiro Yano, manager of the Center's bookstore.

The Tokushima Christian Center itself is impressive, its roof framing a majestic old tree. Once a month, the Center provides mobile service to the remoter churches of Shikoku, delivering Christian books, periodicals, church school and kindergarten materials and a selection of new books.

The leaders of the Women's Society of the Kochi Church, who take an active interest in promoting good reading in their congregation, were on hand when the bookmobile arrived. Novels of the Christian author, Ayako Miura, and translations of Barclay's New Testament Commentaries are popular.

From Kochi we traveled through coastal and highland regions, visiting rural and semi-rural churches. Sometimes we were met by pastors, sometimes by kindergarten teachers; in one place a medical doctor, who is a good customer of Christian books, was our contact.

On our itinerary was the Shikoku District Pastors' Retreat, being held at a cliffside hotel near Aki with a spectacular view of the Pacific coastline. Yano delivered orders to pastors there and took new orders while pastors browsed through the bookmobile offerings during their one hour of free time.

We then went to the site of the Tosa Reinan Church on the shores of the Pacific. Pastored by Shikoku District Moderator Nobuatsu Naramoto, this church is in the open rural country and is surrounded by family grave plots. Beyond stretch row after row of vinyl greenhouses that enable the farmers in the area to reap two crops annually from the sandy soil. A day nursery operated by the church aids the hardworking farming and fishing families. The prosperity of the families is evident from the number of newly built houses in the area.

We returned to Tokushima late at night and early the next morning took the train around northern Shikoku to Matsuyama--location of the Matsuyama Jonan and Shinonome Christian Schools. Added to my memories of Shikoku was the sight of the sun setting into the Inland Sea, as seen from Matsuyama Castle.

what has been --- I N T H E K Y O D A N --- what is to be

I. Coming Events

Full meeting of Council of Cooperation (Kyodan, Christian schools and social work and North American churches) on 11/17-18
NCC Div. of Education to hold Okinawa Christian Education Research meeting at Naha 11/2-4
Special service for "erecting framework" of Home for Retiring Women Pastors to be conducted Mon. 10/30
25th Kyodan Exec. Comm. to meet 10/23-24; Acting Moderator and Acting Gen. Secy. to be elected (Shimpo 10/21)

II. Recent Events

Districts

Tohoku district aims to strengthen "mission" power of each church; encourages laymen to attend Dec. mission policy meeting (Shimpo 10/21)

Education

Hokkaido education small comm. holds seminar on effect of Ministry of Education regulations on church kindergartens (Shimpo 10/21)

Faith and Order

"Confession of Faith and Biblical Studies" is subject of 12th Japan New Testament Scholars' Meeting 10/12-13 (Shimpo 10/7)
Japan Christian Learned Society studies eschatology from historical viewpoint at 10/10-12 meeting (Shimpo 9/30)

Financial

504 churches contribute ¥1,681,807 (\$5,600) for Church Building Fund in 1971 from church anniversary offerings (Shimpo 10/21)

Kyodan

Shimpo prints regulations for qualifying as Kyodan church (Shimpo 9/30)
see "Coming Events"

Overseas

24 fraternal delegates of Christian Church (Disciples) hold dialogue session with Kyodan staff and guests (News Letter 10/72)
Moderator M. Ko of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan discusses church-to-church Agreement with Kyodan executives (Shimpo 10/14)

Social

Social Comm. explains stand on enshrining of deceased Christian members of Self Defense Force, asks each church's support (Shimpo 9/30)
Social Comm. pursues study of Tennosei (emperor system); Nishi-Chugoku pastors study in relation to Christian faith (Shimpo 10/21)
Special Comm. on Yasukuni Nationalization Problem sends appeal to each church on presentation of bill to Diet for 5th time (Shimpo 9/23)
Christian churches unite in opposing institution of town-supported shrine in Aichi prefecture (Shimpo 10/7; Shimbun 10/14)
Social Comm. raises funds for Chubu district churches damaged by typhoon (Shimpo 10/14)

Women

see "Coming Events"